

Referendum on carrying concealed handgun

HB 1776 by Wilson, Carter (Patterson)

- DIGEST:** HB 1776 would have placed a nonbinding referendum on the November 2, 1993, ballot asking voters whether the Department of Public Safety should adopt rules for the issuance of licenses to carry handguns.
- GOVERNOR'S REASON FOR VETO:** "This bill would spend 60,000 of taxpayer dollars to do a public opinion poll for gun interests. There are plenty of private pollsters that can be hired for that purpose. It is a bill that promotes violence on our streets and in our neighborhoods. I cannot in good conscience waste taxpayer money to conduct a public opinion poll that will accomplish nothing and diverts our attention from real issues of crime such as drug abuse and prison overcrowding."
- RESPONSE:** Rep. Bill Carter, co-author of HB 1776, said: "Article 1, Section 23 of the Texas Constitution reads as follows: Every citizen shall have the right to keep and bear arms in the lawful defense of himself or the State; but the Legislature shall have power, by law, to regulate the wearing of arms, with a view to prevent crime.
- "The 73rd Legislature overwhelmingly passed HB 1776, which regulated the wearing of arms. Governor Ann Richards vowed to 'veto' the legislation, so Ron Wilson and I decided to let the people, 'by referendum,' tell us if they wanted to be able to protect themselves from criminal predators.
- "The governor did not want to know the voters' opinion and therefore she vetoed this bill.
- "Part of the veto message stated this vote would cost Texas citizens an additional \$60,000. This is far from the truth. The only additional cost would have been what it costs to add three or four lines of print on a ballot on a regular election day.
- "The governor called this bill 'silly' and she said it was a 'joke' that senators and House members wanted to allow the voters to speak on this issue.

"I believe history will record the 'joke' was the 'veto.'"

NOTES:

HB 1776 was analyzed in the April 22 *Daily Floor Report*.